Christ the King—St. Stephen
Scripture Reflection
32nd Sunday of Ordinary Time
2026—A Cycle



What do I see?

How would I define everyday wisdom ("common sense")? If I think of myself as a wise person, what signs of that wisdom do I see in my daily decision-making processes? What was the most <u>un</u>wise decision I ever made? What other flaws am I aware of that need correction?

Image source no longer available online. The saying is attributed to Socrates.

Opening Prayer

A Prayer for Wisdom
Father in heaven,
I know you love me.
You faithfully and caringly reach out...
when I wander off in the wrong direction.
Help me to be sensitive to your guidance.
Let me realize when I've gone off-track.
Don't let confusion… fear… and doubt haunt me...
and harden my heart.
Help me to stay on the right course.
Grant me wisdom to make right choices…
and uphold right values.
Amen.

Source: Connect Us

Scripture Readings

Wisdom 6: 12-16 "Whoever is on the watch for wisdom will be free of anxiety."
Psalm 63: 2-8 "I bless you every time I take a breath."
I Thessalonians 4: 13-18 "Since Jesus died and broke loose from the grave, God will most certainly bring back to life those who died in Jesus."
Matthew 25: 1-13 "Stay alert. You have no idea when (Jesus) might arrive."

Introduction to the 32nd Sunday of Ordinary Time

A major theme of this weekend's readings is our call to "wisdom" (seeing reality as it truly is). We live in a time of misplaced wisdom, tempted as we are to substitute a divisive "me versus you" battle for wise discourse. The inspired writers posed similar themes—*think before you speak/act*… and *ask for advice*, even when you *think* you are right.

This week's scriptures take us to the Book of Wisdom of Solomon, and from there to Psalm 63, then to First Thessalonians 4: 13-18, where St. Paul told the community, "We *[including his co-authors, Silvanus (Silas) and Timothy]* do not want you to be unaware… about those who have fallen asleep." Some of Paul's early converts in Thessalonica mistakenly believed the "second coming" of Christ would happen in their own lifetimes. Some refused to work and earn a living. Instead, they chose to sit and wait for the "end times" to come. When Paul heard that some of them expected not to live to a ripe old age and die, he wrote to correct their thinking. He told them Jesus might not come when *they* expected. His message to them in brief? Carry on with your daily lives. Let God decide when the "end times" should come.

This weekend's scripture readings climax with Jesus' parable of the "wise" and "foolish" bridesmaids in Matthew 25: 1-13. Jesus urged his followers to "stay awake, for you do not know the day nor the hour." To illustrate this, he offered the graphic parable of the wise and foolish virgins. Instead of planning ahead, the foolish ones lived moment-to-moment… depending on others to rescue them from their material and spiritual short-sightedness.

A Reading From the Book of Wisdom (6: 12-16)

"Wisdom is luminous and never tarnished. She willingly lets herself be seen by those who love her and known by those who look for her. She hastens to meet those who long for her. Seek her in the morning and you will not be disappointed; you will find her sitting at your door.

"To meditate on wisdom his understanding fully grown; whoever is on the watch for her will be free of anxiety. She goes in search of those who are worthy of her, graciously meets them on the way, and is present in their every thought."
— Text from the *Christian Community Bible, Catholic Pastoral Edition*

Personal Reflection

The anonymous author of the Book of Wisdom assumed the role of King Solomon, putting his own call to wisdom on the great king's lips. We hear a woman's

voice in this passage. Yahweh's feminine expression calls us to recognize God's plan and discern God's presence.

To be wise according to God's vision of wisdom means to be aware of the presence of God in all circumstances of our lives, We need to show good judgment in making decisions. The narrator prizes one thing especially—understanding the need for active preparation for life after death. With that kind of preparation, we will find peace of mind and heart… no matter what path we might take to get there.

Note: *Early Judaism attributed the "Wisdom Books" to David's son, King Solomon (990-931 BC/BCE), born of Bathsheba (get the whole sordid story in 2 Samuel 11: 1-17).*

"(Wisdom) willingly lets herself be seen by those who love her… and known by those who look for her."
— *What do I consider the wisest (or one of the wisest) decisions I ever made? What in particular did I learn from that experience?*

Psalm 63 (2-8)

A Psalm of David, when he was out in the Judean wilderness

My soul is thirsting for you, O Lord my God.

So here I am in the place of worship, eyes open,
drinking in your strength and glory.
In your generous love I am really living at last!
My lips brim praises like fountains.
I bless you every time I take a breath;
My arms wave like banners of praise to you.
My soul is thirsting for you, O Lord my God.

I eat my fill of prime rib and gravy;
I smack my lips. It's time to shout praises!
If I'm sleepless at midnight,
I spend the hours in grateful reflection.
Because you've always stood up for me,
I'm free to run and play.
I hold on to you for dear life,
and you hold me steady as a post.
My soul is thirsting for you, O Lord my God.

Personal Reflection

This psalmist (not David) sought total immersion in Yahweh, including all relationships and encounters—during the day or at night, waking or sleeping. As humans, though, we tend to grow weary of everything, even fun and pleasure. No

human love is entirely satisfying. Why? Because the shadow of separation or death looms over every human relationship. Only the One who is the source of living water can satisfy our deepest human thirst. Saint Augustine of Hippo (354-430 AD/CE) expressed it this way: "You have created us for yourself, O Lord… and our hearts are restless until they rest in you."

"In your generous love I am really living at last!"
— *In my daily life, how aware am I of Yahweh's surrounding presence to and within me, whether at work, at ease, eating or sleeping? In church and in the "marketplace"?*

From St. Paul's First Letter to the Thessalonians (4: 13-18)

"Regarding the question, friends, that has come up about what happens to those already dead and buried, we don't want you in the dark any longer. First off, you must not carry on over them like people who have nothing to look forward to, as if the grave were the last word. Since Jesus died and broke loose from the grave, God will most certainly bring back to life those who died in Jesus.

"And then this: We can tell you with complete confidence—we have the Master's word on it—that when the Master comes again to get us, those of us who are still alive will not get a jump on the dead and leave them behind. In actual fact, they'll be ahead of us. The Master himself will give the command. Archangel thunder! God's trumpet blast! He'll come down from heaven and the dead in Christ will rise—they'll go first. Then the rest of us, who are still alive at the time, will be caught up with them into the clouds to meet the Master. Oh, we'll be walking on air! And then there will be one huge family reunion with the Master. So, reassure one another with these words."

Personal Reflection

Comedian and filmmaker Woody Allen's famous quote on death was, "I'm not afraid of dying…. I just don't want to be there when it happens."

The Thessalonian community consisted entirely of recent converts to Christianity. They had little experience upon which to draw when faced with new concepts about life and afterlife. All their lives they had accepted the fate of being born to die—and that death ended their existence.

Paul sought to comfort their concerns about death… *and* their new understanding of life *after* death. He urged them to awaken each day with full assurance that Christ would come at whatever hour he chose and escort them to his heavenly kingdom.

— *How do I imagine my own experience of death? Do I dread it? Will I accept it when it comes?*

The Gospel According to Matthew (25: 1-13)

"God's kingdom is like ten young virgins who took oil lamps and went out to greet the bridegroom. Five were silly and five were smart. The silly virgins took

lamps, but no extra oil. The smart virgins took jars of oil to feed their lamps. The bridegroom didn't show up when they expected him, and they all fell asleep.

"In the middle of the night someone yelled out, 'He's here! The bridegroom's here! Go out and greet him!'

"The ten virgins got up and got their lamps ready. The silly virgins said to the smart ones, 'Our lamps are going out. Lend us some of your oil.'

"They answered, 'There might not be enough to go around. Go buy your own.'

"They did, but while they were out buying oil, the bridegroom arrived. When everyone who was there to greet him had gone into the wedding feast, the door was locked.

"Much later, the other virgins, the silly ones, showed up and knocked on the door, saying, 'Master, we're here. Let us in.'

"He answered, 'Do I know you? I don't think I know you.'

"So, stay alert. You have no idea when the bridegroom might arrive."

Personal Reflection

Jesus told this parable of two groups of bridesmaids preparing for the arrival of the bride and groom. At face value, the story seems pretty simple. Come prepared, or don't come at all. A deeper study reveals that Jesus—as usual—added several layers of wisdom over the obvious storyline.

St. Joseph Sister Mary McGlone, CSJ (Carondelet), writing in *The National Catholic Reporter*, commented wisely that, "Jesus' parable… is confusing at best…." She quoted Jesuit spiritual writer Mark Thibodeaux, "Much of Christian spirituality presumes that our desires are bad…. Ignatius [of Loyola] believed our problem was not desiring too much but rather desiring too little."

Jesus' complex parable focuses on constant attention and fidelity to God. The ten prepared young women followed the custom of waiting through the night for the bridegroom who would accompany them to his house. The bridegroom arrived late, but he still denied entrance to the unprepared bridesmaids. It's interesting that the bride's point of view seems to have had no place in this parable.

Sr. McGlone concludes with this summary, "The [five] wise women were the ones whose desire led them to be prepared for the long haul. Nothing mattered more than being ready when the bridegroom came." As for the other five... they missed their chance, due to their own neglect.

— *Thinking back over my life, was there a particular moment when I regretted not planning better? What did I learn from that situation?*

For Inspirational Watching, Listening, and Reading

Watch

"What Really Happened to Bathsheba?—The Scandal David Ordered Everyone to Forget"

Do yourself a favor by watching this amazing retelling of the story of David and Bathsheba. Don't be put off by its 30 min. length.

"The Gifts of the Holy Spirit: Wisdom" with Susan Timoney, professor of pastoral studies, The Catholic University of America (2 min.)

Listen
"Wisdom Song," sung by Laura Woodley Osman

Listen to "Psalm 63" sung by the Dameans (*day-me-uns*)

Read
Jerusalem, Jerusalem by James Carroll — The history of Jerusalem and its impact on world history. *(I've read this book and gave it my highest rating.—AJG)*

Preview of Next Weekend's Scriptures

33rd Sunday in Ordinary Time
Proverbs 31: 10-13, 19-20, 30-31 "A good woman is hard to find, and worth far more than diamonds."
Psalm 128: 1-5 "All you who fear God, how blessed you are!"
First Thessalonians 5: 1-6 "Friends, you're not in the dark, so how could you be taken off guard?"
Matthew 25: 14-30 "I was afraid I might disappoint you, so I found a good hiding place and secured your money. Here it is, safe and sound."

Closing Prayer

(edited, abridged, and adapted for use here)

A Prayer for Godly Wisdom
Lord,
thank you for the people you have placed in my life…
who speak holy truth… love… and words of wisdom.
Give me a discerning heart.
Let me know when you are using someone...
to speak instruction to my heart.
Give me strength and courage...
to follow through with your advice…
even when it's hard.
Fill me with peace in knowing that…
even when I take a wrong turn…
your good purpose for me will prevail.
Amen.

Source: Crosswalk

Unless otherwise indicated, the Sunday readings are from *The Message* Bible translated by Rev. Dr. Eugene H. Peterson (Catholic Edition)
Peterson's translation of the Bible is a highly interpretive paraphrase, celebrated for its readability.
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